

*Washington, DC* - A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report made public today confirms that Federal and State agencies, plagued by deficiencies in the 2000 Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP), are severely limited in their ability to effectively implement the plan and manage the Yellowstone National Park bison population.

In October 2006, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) and Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) asked the GAO to update and expand the scope of its work on bison after adoption of the IBMP. The Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands held a March 2007 oversight hearing to receive testimony on the current management of Yellowstone National Park bison.

More than 3,000 bison have been slaughtered since adoption of the IBMP in 2000; 1,160 bison have been slaughtered in 2008 alone.

"This report makes it clear that all of the federal and state agencies involved in managing Yellowstone's bison need to work more cooperatively and in a more transparent fashion. The bison is a precious American icon and we must do everything we can to protect the species for its own good as well as for the enjoyment of millions of Americans and other visitors who travel to Yellowstone each year to see these magnificent animals. At the same time, we must work to ensure that Montana's cattle population maintains its brucellosis-free status even though there hasn't been a single documented case of brucellosis transmission between wild bison and cattle. This report further convinces me that we can achieve all of our goals if we create the right structure for the federal and state agencies to work together. I will be exploring all legislative means by which we can protect Yellowstone's bison and Montana's cattle, including the enactment of the GAO's recommendation of annual reports to Congress from the relevant agencies on the progress they are making. The entire process must be reorganized and opened up for oversight by Congress and the public," Hinchey said.

"It has been clear for some time now that the current Interagency Bison Management Plan is not working. The GAO's findings confirm this, along with the fact that both Federal and State agencies could and should do much, much more to protect these magnificent animals while still safeguarding the cattle industry. The Committee will review the report with an eye toward what might be done at the Federal level to help curb the slaughter of the Yellowstone bison population," Rahall said.